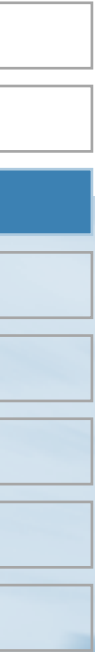


European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages

A reflection tool for language teacher education

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EPOSTL

European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages



European Centre for Modern Languages
Centre européen pour les langues vivantes



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<http://www.ecml.at/epostl>

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1 The 33 member states of the Enlarged Partial Agreement of the ECML are: Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", United Kingdom.



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This document was produced within the framework of the ECML project:
From Profile to Portfolio: A Framework for Reflection in Language Teacher Education

Further details are available from:
<http://www.ecml.at/epostl>



What is the EPOSTL?

The European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages (EPOSTL) is a document for students undergoing initial teacher education. It will encourage you to reflect on your didactic knowledge and skills necessary to teach languages, helps you to assess your own didactic competences and enables you to monitor your progress and to record your experiences of teaching during the course of your teacher education.

Main aims of the EPOSTL

1. to encourage you to reflect on the competences a teacher strives to attain and on the underlying knowledge which feeds these competences;
2. to help prepare you for your future profession in a variety of teaching contexts;
3. to promote discussion between you and your peers and between you and your teacher educators and mentors;
4. to facilitate self-assessment of your developing competence;
5. to provide an instrument which helps chart progress.

Contents of the EPOSTL

The EPOSTL contains the following sections:

- A **personal statement** section to help you, at the beginning of your teacher education, to reflect on general questions related to teaching;
- A **self-assessment** section, consisting of 'can-do' descriptors, to facilitate reflection and self-assessment;
- A **dossier**, in which you can make the outcome of your self-assessment transparent, to provide evidence of progress and to record examples of work relevant to teaching;
- A **glossary** of the most important terms relating to language learning and teaching used in the EPOSTL;
- An **index** of terms used in the descriptors;
- A **users' guide** which gives detailed information about the EPOSTL.

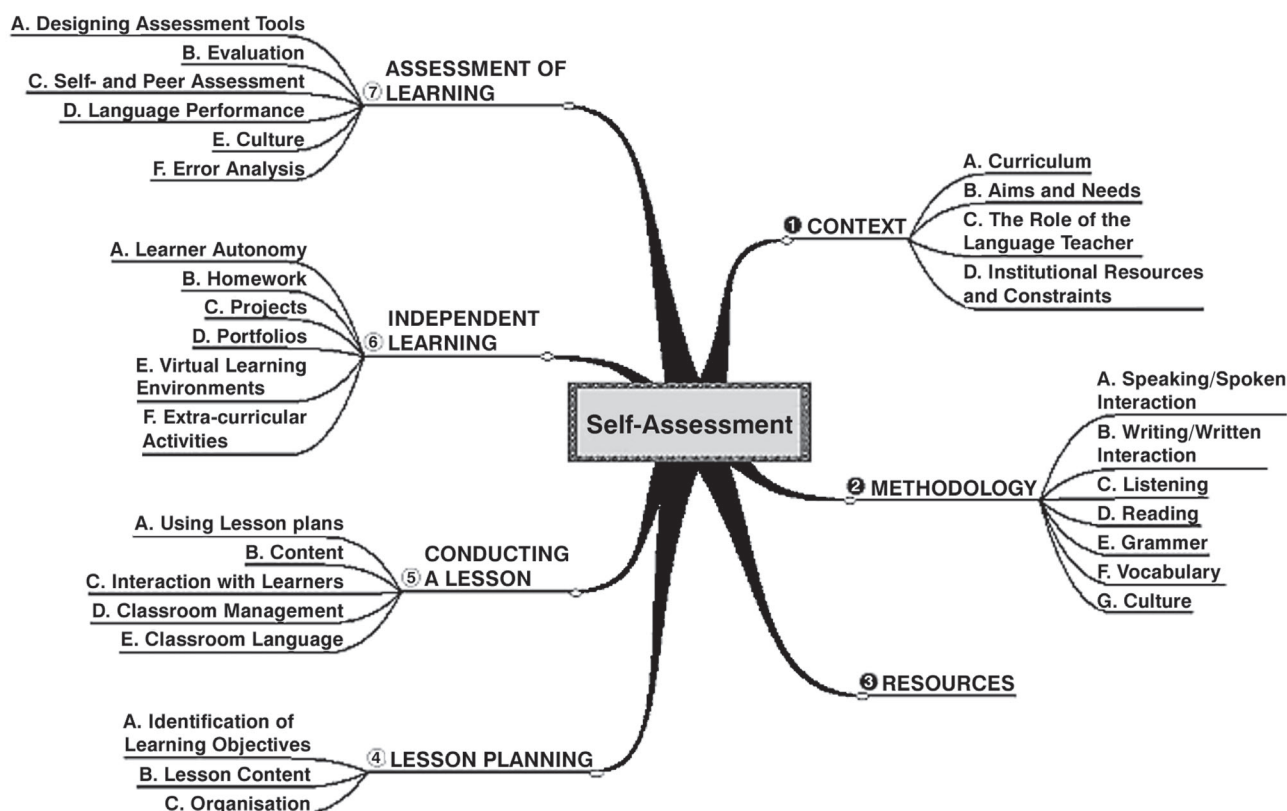
The self-assessment descriptors

At the heart of the EPOSTL are the 193 descriptors of competences related to language teaching which comprise the self-assessment section. These descriptors may be regarded as a set of core competences which language teachers should strive to attain.



Categorisation of descriptors

The descriptors are grouped into seven general categories. These represent areas in which teachers require knowledge and a variety of competences and need to make decisions related to teaching. Each heading has been sub-divided as follows:

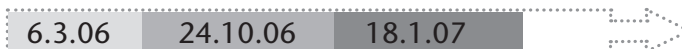


Self-assessment scales

Each descriptor is accompanied by a bar, which will help you to visualise and chart your own competence. You can colour in the bar according to your own assessment. This may take place at different stages of your teacher education.

On completion of your teacher education programme you may have produced a bar which looks something like this.

1. I can create a supportive atmosphere that invites learners to take part in speaking activities.





In the above example the student has made self-assessments at three stages of her teacher education, which chart her growing competence. However, she feels she still has some way to go and has therefore left part of the bar blank. She has also added the date on which the self-assessment was carried out. It should be noted that it is not expected that all bars should be filled in at the end of your teaching programme! Learning to teach and becoming a good teacher is a continuous and life-long process!

Although the descriptors provide a systematic way of considering competences, they should not be regarded as a checklist! It is important that they act as a stimulus for students, teacher educators and mentors to discuss important aspects of teacher education which underlie them and that they contribute to developing professional awareness.

Further information about using the EPOSTL can be found in the users' guide.



Your name:

Institution:

Date of beginning to use EPOSTL:

The aim of the personal statement is to help you to reflect on aspects related to teaching in general and to think about questions that may be important at the beginning of your teacher education. Below you will find some questions concerning the teaching of languages which you may like to reflect on. At the end of this section, you can read some comments on the role and value of reflection.

- | Experiences of being taught | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Positive: | |
| Negative: | |
- (Try to analyse why these points were unsuccessful and consider what steps could be taken to improve the points you have mentioned.)

-
-
-

-
-
-



3. Expectations of your teacher education course

- a) What do you expect most from your teacher education?
- b) What do you want most from your teacher education?
- c) What do you think that your teacher educators expect from you?

4. How important do you consider the following for a language teacher? Add your own ideas. Discuss with a partner and give reasons for your choices.

	How important? not → very important				
1. Cooperating with others	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Good organisational skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Being able to explain grammar	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Reflection

In doing the last self-assessment activity the temptation is to respond quickly. However, on reflection, and given more time, you sometimes find that your first response needs to be modified. Initially you may have considered, for example, that 'being able to explain grammar' is very important.

not → very important

3. Being able to explain grammar

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒

Discussion with others in your student teacher group, or with your tutor, or with teachers in school, may reveal that 'explaining grammar' can be interpreted in different ways, such as:

- explaining rules
 - in the language the learners are learning
 - in the language of school education
- or
- providing examples of use and analysing them

Further thought could prompt the idea that what is important is the learner's ability to explain grammar, rather than your ability as a student teacher to do so. It is this kind of reflection and these thinking processes that the EPOSTL is aiming to encourage.

In the example above the process of reflection has taken two forms:

- personal reflection: you have considered what the statement means on your own;
- dialogic reflection: you have discussed and perhaps modified your view by working with others.

The **purposes** of your reflection was not just to answer the question but also to justify your response in a principled, reasoned and informed way.

The process of personal reflection enhances your ability to think independently, in parallel to learning about teaching and learning. Reflecting and collaborating with others when exploring and experimenting with methodologies will also help you to widen your horizons.

In responding to the statement you may also have looked at a book on grammar to see how the word 'grammar' is defined. Reference to resources is another process in developing your critical and enquiring approach to teaching and learning.

This extended example, focused on grammar, leads to the question of which aspects of teaching and learning another language you should reflect on, engage with and explore. Although it is the content of your teacher education course which will provide the framework you need, the EPOSTL will help you to focus on specific questions which student teachers need to address. By asking you to think about a comprehensive range of aspects, features and issues related to teaching and learning a language in different countries it also seeks to enhance your ability to reflect not just on your own context but on similar contexts in other European countries.



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Context

Introduction

Decisions relating to teaching are strongly influenced by the educational and social context in which teachers work. This context is mainly predetermined by the requirements in the national and/or local curricula. However, there may also be international recommendations and documents, which will need consideration. Institutional constraints are another factor to be considered as they may have considerable impact on the work of teachers.

A further dimension of the language learning context includes the overall aims and specific needs of learners, which, when identified, determine what the teacher does.

Language teachers have a number of roles to play. In addition to teaching their subjects they may need to promote the value of language learning among learners, parents and society in general and build on and make the most of what learners bring with them.

Teachers need to ensure ongoing professional growth through self- and peer-assessment, as well as keeping up with information available in the field.



A. Curriculum

1. I can understand the requirements set in national and local curricula.

2. I can design language courses around the requirements of the national and local curricula.

3. I can understand the principles formulated in relevant European documents (e.g. Common European Framework of Reference, European Language Portfolio).

4. I can understand and integrate content of European documents (e.g. Common European Framework of Reference, European Language Portfolio) as appropriate in my teaching.



B. Aims and Needs

1. I can understand the personal, intellectual and cultural value of learning other languages.

2. I can take account of overall, long-term aims based on needs and expectations.

3. I can take into account differing motivations for learning another language.

4. I can take into account the cognitive needs of learners (problem solving, drive for communication, acquiring knowledge etc.).

5. I can take into account the affective needs of learners (sense of achievement, enjoyment etc.).

6. I can take into account and assess the expectations and impact of educational stakeholders (employers, parents, funding agencies etc.).

7. I can take into account attainment target levels set in curricula (e.g. deriving from the *Common European Framework of Reference*).



C. The Role of the Language Teacher

1. I can promote the value and benefits of language learning to learners, parents and others.

2. I can appreciate and make use of the value added to the classroom environment by learners with diverse cultural backgrounds.

3. I can take into account the knowledge of other languages learners may already possess and help them to build on this knowledge when learning additional languages.

4. I can draw on appropriate theories of language, learning, culture etc. and relevant research findings to guide my teaching.

5. I can critically assess my teaching on the basis of experience, learner feedback and learning outcomes and adapt it accordingly.

6. I can critically assess my teaching in relation to theoretical principles.

7. I can accept feedback from my peers and mentors and build this into my teaching.

8. I can observe my peers, recognise different methodological aspects of their teaching and offer them constructive feedback.



9. I can locate relevant articles, journals and research findings relating to aspects of teaching and learning.

10. I can identify and investigate specific pedagogical/ didactic issues related to my learners or my teaching in the form of action research.



D. Institutional Resources and Constraints

1. I can assess how I might use the resources available in my school (OHP, computers, library etc.).

2. I can recognise the organisational constraints and resource limitations existent at my school and adapt my teaching accordingly.



Methodology

Introduction

Methodology is the implementation of learning objectives through teaching procedures. It is based on principles deriving from theories of language description, language learning and language use.

Specific teaching procedures may be applied to support the learning of aspects of the language system, such as grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. However, methodology should reflect the fact that these aspects of language are always present when skills are being practised and are therefore inextricably linked to communication. Also, the teaching of culture and its relationship with language will require specific methodological insights.

Methodology may focus on how teachers can deal with the four main skills of speaking, writing, listening and reading, as reflected in the categorisation of this section. However, in written and oral communication in the classroom two or more skills will usually be integrated and are rarely treated in isolation.

It may be the case that sets of principles and teaching procedures together comprise a coherent method or approach. A method refers to fairly fixed sets of teaching procedures (e.g. 'audio-lingual', 'suggestopedia'), in which the teacher's role is closely defined. An approach is 'the theoretical rationale that underlies everything that happens in the classroom.' (H.D. Brown, 2002: 11). It is usually manifested through sets of principles which, in turn, guide the choice of teaching procedures. Examples are 'the communicative approach' and 'task-based learning'.



A. Speaking/Spoken Interaction

1. I can create a supportive atmosphere that invites learners to take part in speaking activities.

2. I can evaluate and select meaningful speaking and interactional activities to encourage learners of differing abilities to participate.

3. I can evaluate and select meaningful speaking and interactional activities to encourage learners to express their opinions, identity, culture etc.

4. I can evaluate and select a range of meaningful speaking and interactional activities to develop fluency (discussion, role play, problem solving etc.).

5. I can evaluate and select different activities to help learners to become aware of and use different text types (telephone conversations, transactions, speeches etc.).

6. I can evaluate and select a variety of materials to stimulate speaking activities (visual aids, texts, authentic materials etc.).

7. I can evaluate and select activities which help learners to participate in ongoing spoken exchanges (conversations, transactions etc.) and to initiate or respond to utterances appropriately.

8. I can evaluate and select various activities to help learners to identify and use typical features of spoken language (informal language, fillers etc.).



9. I can help learners to use communication strategies (asking for clarification, comprehension checks etc.) and compensation strategies (paraphrasing, simplification etc) when engaging in spoken interaction.



10. I can evaluate and select a variety of techniques to make learners aware of, discriminate and help them to pronounce sounds in the target language.



11. I can evaluate and select a variety of techniques to make learners aware of and help them to use stress, rhythm and intonation.



12. I can evaluate and select a range of oral activities to develop accuracy (grammar, word choice etc.).





B. Writing/Written Interaction

1. I can evaluate and select meaningful activities to encourage learners to develop their creative potential.

2. I can evaluate and select a range of meaningful writing activities to help learners become aware of and use appropriate language for different text types (letters, stories, reports etc).

3. I can evaluate and select texts in a variety of text types to function as good examples for the learners' writing.

4. I can evaluate and select a variety of materials to stimulate writing (authentic materials, visual aids etc.).

5. I can evaluate and select activities which help learners to participate in written exchanges (emails, job applications etc.) and to initiate or respond to texts appropriately.

6. I can help learners to gather and share information for their writing tasks.

7. I can help learners to plan and structure written texts (e.g. by using mind maps, outlines etc.).

8. I can help learners to monitor, reflect on, edit and improve their own writing.



9. I can use peer-assessment and feedback to assist the writing process.

10. I can use a variety of techniques to help learners to develop awareness of the structure, coherence and cohesion of a text and produce texts accordingly.

11. I can evaluate and select a variety of techniques to make learners aware of and use spelling patterns and irregular spelling.

12. I can evaluate and select writing activities to consolidate learning (grammar, vocabulary, spelling etc.).



C. Listening

1. I can select texts appropriate to the needs, interests and language level of the learners.

2. I can provide a range of pre-listening activities which help learners to orientate themselves to a text.

3. I can encourage learners to use their knowledge of a topic and their expectations about a text when listening.

4. I can design and select different activities in order to practise and develop different listening strategies (listening for gist, specific information etc.)

5. I can design and select different activities which help learners to recognise and interpret typical features of spoken language (tone of voice, intonation, style of speaking etc.).

6. I can help learners to apply strategies to cope with typical aspects of spoken language (background noise, redundancy etc.).

7. I can help learners to apply strategies to cope with difficult or unknown vocabulary of a text.

8. I can evaluate and select a variety of post-listening tasks to provide a bridge between listening and other skills.



D. Reading

1. I can select texts appropriate to the needs, interests and language level of the learners.

2. I can provide a range of pre-reading activities to help learners to orientate themselves to a text.

3. I can encourage learners to use their knowledge of a topic and their expectations about a text when reading.

4. I can apply appropriate ways of reading a text in class (e.g. aloud, silently, in groups etc.).

5. I can set different activities in order to practise and develop different reading strategies according to the purpose of reading (skimming, scanning etc.).

6. I can help learners to develop different strategies to cope with difficult or unknown vocabulary in a text.

7. I can evaluate and select a variety of post-reading tasks to provide a bridge between reading and other skills.

8. I can recommend books appropriate to the needs, interests and language level of the learners.

9. I can help learners to develop critical reading skills (reflection, interpretation, analysis etc.).



E. Grammar

1. I can introduce a grammatical item and help learners to practise it through meaningful contexts and appropriate texts.

2. I can introduce, and help students to deal with, new or unknown items of grammar in a variety of ways (teacher presentation, awareness-raising, discovery etc.).

3. I can deal with questions learners may ask about grammar and, if necessary, refer to appropriate grammar reference books.

4. I can use grammatical metalanguage if and when appropriate to the learners' needs.

5. I can evaluate and select grammatical exercises and activities, which support learning and encourage oral and written communication.



F. Vocabulary

1. I can evaluate and select a variety of activities which help learners to learn vocabulary.

2. I can evaluate and select tasks which help learners to use new vocabulary in oral and written contexts.

3. I can evaluate and select activities which enhance learners' awareness of register differences.



G. Culture

1. I can evaluate and select a variety of texts, source materials and activities which awaken learners' interest in and help them to develop their knowledge and understanding of their own and the other language culture (cultural facts, events, attitudes and identity etc.).

2. I can create opportunities for learners to explore the culture of target language communities out of class (Internet, emails etc).

3. I can evaluate and select a variety of texts, source materials and activities which make learners aware of similarities and differences in sociocultural 'norms of behaviour'.

4. I can evaluate and select activities (role plays, simulated situations etc.) which help learners to develop their socio-cultural competence.

5. I can evaluate and select a variety of texts, source material and activities which help learners to reflect on the concept of 'otherness' and understand different value systems.

6. I can evaluate and select texts, source materials and activities to make the learners aware of stereotyped views and challenge these.

7. I can evaluate and select activities which enhance the learners' intercultural awareness.

8. I can evaluate and select a variety of texts and activities to make learners aware of the interrelationship between culture and language.



Resources

Introduction

This section is concerned with a variety of sources teachers can draw on in the process of locating, selecting and/or producing ideas, texts, activities, tasks and reference materials useful for their learners. The national context with its curricula and recommendations plays an important role in the process of taking decisions related to the use of a coursebook. The local context with the institutional resources and constraints influences the equipment used as well as the process of selecting and designing appropriate materials. Aims and needs of the learners, their age, language level, motivations and interests guide the type of resources and ways of using them. Therefore, not only ready-made materials, texts and activities, but also those produced by teachers and learners find their place in the learning process, which might take place either in the classroom or in the course of independent learning.



1. I can identify and evaluate a range of coursebooks/materials appropriate for the age, interests and the language level of the learners.

2. I can select those texts and language activities from coursebooks appropriate for my learners.

3. I can locate and select listening and reading materials appropriate for the needs of my learners from a variety of sources, such as literature, mass media and the Internet.

4. I can make use of ideas and materials included in teachers' handbooks and resource books.

5. I can design learning materials and activities appropriate for my learners.

6. I can recommend dictionaries and other reference books useful for my learners.

7. I can guide learners to produce materials for themselves and for other learners.

8. I can select and use ICT materials and activities in the classroom which are appropriate for my learners.



9. I can design ICT materials and activities appropriate for my learners.

10. I can guide learners to use the Internet for information retrieval.

11. I can use and critically assess ICT learning programmes and platforms.



Lesson planning

Introduction

Planning lessons or periods of teaching deals with the main didactic questions of why, what and how: why one should focus on a specific learning objective, what material to choose and how to use the learning material.

For the teacher the most important of these is to know why he or she makes a decision on which material to bring into the classroom and which activities to choose. The decision is dependent on curriculum requirements and on specific groups of learners. Teachers need to know the curriculum and how to transform aspects of it into transparent aims and objectives which can be understood by the learners.

Choice of content is closely linked to the objectives. Following a textbook is usually not sufficient since textbooks only represent the author's interpretation of the curriculum and rarely take individual learners into consideration.

Planning activities depends on both learning objectives and content and requires teachers to consider how learners can reach the objectives through the material chosen. When planning a lesson, the teacher's knowledge of language learning theory, a wide scope of methodology, resources and learner activities are as important as knowledge of the individual learner's abilities.



A. Identification of Learning Objectives

1. I can identify curriculum requirements and set learning aims and objectives suited to my learners' needs and interests.

2. I can plan specific learning objectives for individual lessons and/or for a period of teaching.

3. I can set objectives which challenge learners to reach their full potential.

4. I can set objectives which take into account the differing levels of ability and special educational needs of the learners.

5. I can decide whether to formulate objectives in terms of skills, topics, situations, linguistic systems (functions, notions, forms etc.).

6. I can set objectives which encourage learners to reflect on their learning.



B. Lesson Content

1. I can structure lesson plans and/or plan for periods of teaching in a coherent and varied sequence of content.

2. I can vary and balance activities to include a variety of skills and competences.

3. I can plan activities to ensure the interdependence of listening, reading, writing and speaking.

4. I can plan activities to emphasise the interdependence of language and culture.

5. I can plan activities which link grammar and vocabulary with communication.

6. I can plan to teach elements of other subjects using the target language (cross- curricular teaching, CLIL etc.).

7. I can identify time needed for specific topics and activities and plan accordingly.

8. I can design activities to make the learners aware and build on their existing knowledge.



9. I can vary and balance activities to enhance and sustain the learners' motivation and interest.

10. I can vary and balance activities in order to respond to individuals learners' learning styles.

11. I can take on board learners' feedback and comments and incorporate this in future lessons.

12. I can involve learners in lesson planning.



C. Lesson Organisation

1. I can select from and plan a variety of organisational forms (frontal, individual, pair, group work) as appropriate.

2. I can plan for learner presentations and learner interaction.

3. I can plan when and how to use the target language, including metalanguage I may need in the classroom.

4. I can plan lessons and periods of teaching with other teachers and/or student teachers (team teaching, with other subject teachers etc.).



Conducting a Lesson

Introduction

The section on conducting a lesson focuses on what teachers do in Modern Language classrooms and on the skills required. The first of these, expressed as a broad category, is the implementation of a lesson plan. This takes into account an ability to sequence activities in a coherent yet flexible way, to take account of learners' prior learning and to be responsive to individual performances in class.

This section also identifies as significantly important teachers' interactions with the class during the teaching and learning. Within interaction consideration is given to an initial settling down and to maintaining attention, as well as to encouraging learner initiatives and responses, and to working with and being responsive to a range of learning styles and learning strategies. Also identified in detail is the teacher's ability to manage classroom events, organise different ways of working and use a range of resources, instructional media and ICT.

The final group of descriptors focuses on the teacher's use of the target language in class. Experience and research tell us that the skills involved here have to do with deciding when it is most effective in terms of learning to use the target language and for what purposes, and when recourse to the home language might be more appropriate. Also involved is the teacher's ability to help learners understand what is said or written, as well as to encourage them to use the target language when communicating with the teacher and with each other.



A. Using Lesson Plans

1. I can start a lesson in an engaging way.

2. I can be flexible when working from a lesson plan and respond to learner interests as the lesson progresses.

3. I can ensure smooth transitions between activities and tasks for individuals, groups and the whole class.

4. I can adjust my time schedule when unforeseen situations occur.

5. I can time classroom activities to reflect individual learners' attention spans.

6. I can finish off a lesson in a focused way.



B. Content

1. I can present language content (new and previously encountered items of language, topics etc.) in ways which are appropriate for individuals and specific groups of learners.

2. I can relate what I teach to learners' knowledge and previous language learning experiences.

3. I can relate what I teach to current events in local and international contexts.

4. I can relate the language I am teaching to the culture of those who speak it.



C. Interaction with Learners

1. I can settle a group of learners into a room and gain their attention at the beginning of a lesson.

2. I can keep and maximise the attention of learners during a lesson.

3. I can be responsive and react supportively to learner initiative and interaction.

4. I can encourage learner participation whenever possible.

5. I can cater for a range of learning styles.

6. I can make explicit and help learners to develop appropriate learning strategies.



D. Classroom Management

1. I can take on different roles according to the needs of the learners and requirements of the activity (resource person, mediator, supervisor etc.).

2. I can create opportunities for and manage individual, partner, group and whole class work.

3. I can make and use resources efficiently (flashcards, charts etc.).

4. I can manage and use instructional media efficiently (OHP, ICT, video etc.).

5. I can supervise and assist learners' use of different forms of ICT both in and outside the classroom.



E. Classroom Language

1. I can conduct a lesson in the target language.

2. I can decide when it is appropriate to use the target language and when not to.

3. I can use the target language as metalanguage.

4. I can use various strategies when learners do not understand the target language.

5. I can encourage learners to use the target language in their activities.

6. I can encourage learners to relate the target language to other languages they speak or have learned where and when this is helpful.



Independent learning

Introduction

Language learning in a school context is both a matter of learning individually and in cooperation with peers, as well as independent learning with the guidance of a teacher. This means giving the individual learner or groups of learners a chance to take charge of aspects of their own learning processes in order to reach their full potential.

As far as learner autonomy and project work are concerned, taking charge means choosing objectives, content, activities, outcomes and forms of assessment. It could be some of these aspects of learning or all, depending on the situation. Autonomous learning is an integral part of learning foreign languages, not an additional method of teaching. Teachers need to know how to structure lessons and design tasks which assist the learners in their choices and their ability to reflect on and evaluate their learning. Portfolios can provide valuable insight into the individual's progress both for the teacher and the learners themselves.

Homework and various extra-curricular activities provide valuable additions to language learning at school. It is the teacher's responsibility to provide real learning opportunities for students beyond the classroom.

ICTs play an increasingly central role in foreign language learning and require teachers to be familiar with information systems and computer-mediated communication. Collaborative learning environments as well as individual use of ICT information sources foster independent learning and, if appropriately employed, promote learner autonomy.



A. Learner Autonomy

1. I can evaluate and select a variety of activities which help learners to reflect on their existing knowledge and competences.

2. I can evaluate and select a variety of activities which help learners to identify and reflect on individual learning processes and learning styles.

3. I can guide and assist learners in setting their own aims and objectives and in planning their own learning.

4. I can evaluate and select tasks which help learners to reflect on and develop specific learning strategies and study skills.

5. I can assist learners in choosing tasks and activities according to their individual needs and interests.

6. I can help learners to reflect on and evaluate their own learning processes and evaluate the outcomes.



B. Homework

1. I can evaluate and select tasks most suited to be carried out by learners at home.

2. I can set homework in cooperation with learners.

3. I can provide necessary support for learners in order for them to do homework independently and assist them with time management.

4. I can assess homework according to valid and transparent criteria.



C. Projects

1. I can plan and manage project work according to relevant aims and objectives.

2. I can plan and organise cross-curricular project work myself or in cooperation with other teachers.

3. I can assist the learners in their choices during the various stages of project work.

4. I can encourage learners to reflect on their work (diaries, logs etc.).

5. I can help learners to use relevant presentation tools.

6. I can assess the process and outcome of project work in cooperation with learners.



D. Portfolios

1. I can set specific aims and objectives of portfolio work (for coursework, for continuous assessment etc.).

2. I can plan and structure portfolio work.

3. I can supervise and give constructive feedback on portfolio work.

4. I can assess portfolios in relation to valid and transparent criteria.

5. I can encourage self- and peer assessment of portfolio work.



E. Virtual Learning Environments

1. I can use various ICT resources (email, web sites, computer programmes etc.).

2. I can advise learners on how to find and evaluate appropriate ICT resources (web sites, search engines, computer programmes etc.).

3. I can initiate and facilitate various learning environments (learning platforms, discussion forums, web pages etc.).



F. Extra-curricular Activities

1. I can recognise when and where the need for extra-curricular activities to enhance learning arises (learner magazines, clubs, excursions etc.).

2. I can set aims and objectives for school trips, exchanges and international cooperation programmes.

3. I can help to organise exchanges in cooperation with relevant resource persons and institutions.

4. I can evaluate the learning outcomes of school trips, exchanges and international cooperation programmes.



Assessment

Introduction

This category is concerned with the choices which the teacher has to make when assessing learning processes or outcomes of learning. These choices relate to broad questions such as what to assess, when to assess, how to assess and how to use the information provided by the assessment process to support learning and to improve one's own teaching.

Assessment may consist of tests and examinations, which take a snapshot of the learner's competence or performance. They may focus on a student's knowledge of language or culture or on performance, the ability to use language in realistic contexts. When designing tests, teachers will need to consider how valid a particular test is in terms of the aims and objectives of learning a language and will need to pay attention to the reliability of grading procedures. It is also worth taking into account how practical a test is to design and administer and how to avoid a washback effect, which may adversely influence teaching.

Forms such as portfolio assessment will provide a continuous picture of the learner's ongoing progress and may be used both by the teacher and the learner. An instrument such as the European Language Portfolio provides a valuable tool for self-assessment.

Assessment procedures may be used mainly for the purpose of summative evaluation - for example, for end-of-term grading or certification – or for formative evaluation - for example, to provide information on the learner's strengths and weaknesses and to help the teacher and/or learner to plan further work.



A. Designing Assessment Tools

1. I can evaluate and select valid assessment procedures (tests, portfolios, self-assessment etc.) appropriate to learning aims and objectives.

2. I can negotiate with learners how their work and progress should best be assessed.

3. I can design and use in-class activities to monitor and assess learners' participation and performance.



B. Evaluation

1. I can identify strengths and areas for improvement in a learner's performance.

2. I can assess a learner's ability to work independently and collaboratively.

3. I can use the process and results of assessment to inform my teaching and plan learning for individuals and groups (i.e. formative assessment).

4. I can present my assessment of a learner's performance and progress in the form of a descriptive evaluation, which is transparent and comprehensible to the learner, parents and others.

5. I can use appropriate assessment procedures to chart and monitor a learner's progress (reports, checklists, grades etc.).

6. I can use assessment scales from the Common European Framework of Reference.

7. I can use a valid institutional/national/international grading system in my assessment of a learner's performance.

8. I can assign grades for tests and examinations using procedures which are reliable and transparent.



C. Self- and Peer Assessment

1. I can help learners to set personal targets and assess their own performance.

2. I can help learners to engage in peer assessment.

3. I can help learners to use the *European Language Portfolio*.



D. Language Performance

1. I can assess a learner's ability to produce a spoken text according to criteria such as content, range, accuracy, fluency, appropriacy of register etc.

2. I can assess a learner's ability to produce a written text according to criteria such as content, range, accuracy, cohesion and coherence etc.

3. I can assess a learner's ability to understand and interpret a spoken text such as listening for gist, specific or detailed information, implication etc.

4. I can assess a learner's ability to understand and interpret a written text such as reading for gist, specific or detailed information, implication etc.

5. I can assess a learner's ability to engage in spoken interaction according to criteria such as content, range, accuracy, fluency and conversational strategies.

6. I can assess a learner's ability to engage in written interaction according to criteria such as content, range, accuracy and appropriacy of response etc.



E. Culture

1. I can assess the learners' knowledge of cultural facts, events etc. of the target language communities.

2. I can assess the learners' ability to make comparisons between their own and the culture of target language communities.

3. I can assess the learner's ability to respond and act appropriately in encounters with the target language culture.



F. Error analysis

1. I can analyse learners' errors and identify the processes that may cause them.

2. I can provide constructive feedback to learners concerning their errors/interlanguage.

3. I can deal with errors that occur in class in a way which supports learning processes and communication.

4. I can deal with errors that occur in spoken and written language in ways which support learning processes and do not undermine confidence and communication.



Reflection grid

The grid below will help you to record your reflections on the descriptors.

Descriptor number(s)	Date of reflection	Your comments



What is the dossier for?

The primary function of the student teacher dossier is to help support claims that your self-assessment of the 'can do' statements is an accurate reflection of your specific skills and abilities. You can do this by building up a 'dossier' of evidence. It is for you to decide what to include since you are the best - and sometimes only - judge of what evidence supports your 'can do' statements convincingly.

A second - and equally important - function is that of encouraging you to think about your progress and your development as a teacher. If, for example, you look through a number of your lesson plans you might become aware that you need to devise an increasing range of ways to help individual learners reach their full potential. Evidence of what you then ask individual learners to do over a period of time could be included in your dossier to support your response to descriptors 3 and 4 in the section on Lesson Planning.

You may also wish to use the dossier in other ways. It can for example become a collection of evidence to inform others - tutors, mentors, examiners, employers etc. It is for you to decide what other purposes it may serve in your local context.

What the dossier will become is a detailed - and useful - record of your professional development with an increasingly varied contents' list for you to add to as you think appropriate. As you build up this record you may like to reflect on why you are choosing to include certain forms of evidence and what each reveals about your growing competence and expertise. You may feel that one piece of evidence serves to illustrate several aspects of what you have achieved, and therefore relates to a number of the 'can do' statements. Evidence built up over time may also enable you to colour in more parts of the 'bars' next to each of the statements. It is this reflection which increases self-knowledge and your ability to formulate personal targets.



What do I put in the dossier?

It will be clear from the list which follows that not all of its suggested evidence can be gathered during your particular training period; some may only be possible when you are a practising teacher. Indeed there is no expectation that everything listed below should be produced during your initial teacher education.

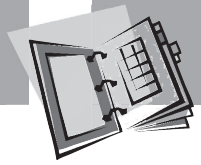
In order to draw up and update the document, you are encouraged to include:

- A. Evidence from **lessons** you have given
- B. Evidence in the form of **lesson observations** and **evaluations**
- C. Evidence such as detailed **reports, comments, checklists** etc compiled by different people involved in your teacher education
- D. Evidence from your **analysis** of what you have done as a teacher – your ‘teacher actions’ - and from learners’ tasks and related performance
- E. Evidence in the form of **case studies** and **action research**
- F. Evidence from **reflection**



A. Evidence from **lessons** you have given

- lesson plans, completed by yourself and/ or with others, for a single or a series of lessons
- lesson 'scripts' (for example the exact words in the target language which you propose to use) and/or transcripts of part of whole lessons
- videos of lessons/ part lessons/ significant moments in a lesson (e.g. starters, plenaries, your or the learners' use of the target language, in-class assessment, pair work, individual learner performances etc)
- examples of learner tasks, classroom aids, teaching and learning materials , web sites etc. you have designed and/or used in and out of class, with a rationale for your choice
- other



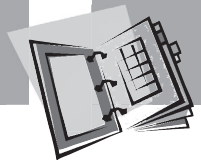
List of documents

Doc. No.	Date	Category	Description	Comments



B. Evidence in the form of **lesson observations** and **evaluations**

- lesson observation notes written by teachers/ mentors/ tutors
- post-lesson evaluations written by you and/ or others
- other



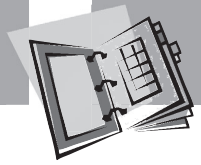
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C. Evidence such as detailed **reports, comments, checklists** etc. compiled by different people involved in your teacher education

- mentor reports, comments, action points and your subsequent follow-up
- official/ formal performance checklists/ indicators (institutional/ regional/ national standards etc) which you may have received
- teacher educators' comments, accounts, formal reports etc. produced over time
- other



List of documents

Doc. No.	Date	Category	Description	Comments



- D. Evidence from your **analysis** of what you have done as a teacher – your ‘teacher actions’ - and from learners’ tasks and related performance
- logs or diaries you have kept, sometimes thematically based (e.g. focussing on learner progression, teacher/learner use of the target language etc.) recorded, perhaps, for detailed analysis after a set period of time, or chronological accounts of what you did as the teacher in class (your ‘teacher actions’) and what the pupils learnt as a result of your teaching
 - learner tasks produced by you and/ or by others, learners’ work, audio/video recordings of learners working together, and all analysed according to their effectiveness in terms of language learning
 - checklists of classroom actions by teachers and their related learner performance outcomes
 - other



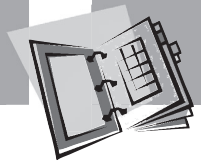
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E. Evidence in the form of **case studies** and **action research**

- case studies of learners (e.g. older/ younger individuals/ groups; less able/ more able learners etc.)
- small-scale action research projects either for yourself or to share with others for discussion, reflection, analysis
- other



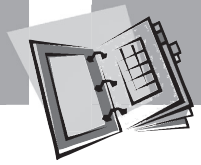
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Doc. No.	Date	Category	Description	Comments



F. Evidence from **reflection**

- samples of assignments written by you and/ or in collaboration with others linking theoretical to practical considerations
- reflections on particular philosophies of modern language teaching
- reflections on personal theories of teaching and learning a foreign language
- articles written by you either solo or with others for student and/or professional journals
- other



List of documents

Doc. No.	Date	Category	Description	Comments



The glossary which follows defines words used in the EPOSTL. It refers quite specifically to their use within the context of language, language teaching and language learning. Where definitions are quotations from the work of others their source is acknowledged in the text and in full in the bibliography. If the source is the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, the reference is abbreviated to CEFR and the page number is shown e.g. (CEFR p9). Full details of this publication are in the bibliography (see Council for Cultural Co-operation Education Committee, Modern Languages Division, Strasbourg, 2001).

Glossary

Achievement is the progress made by learners in relation to their past performance.

Activities – (see Language Activities)

Affective Needs are the needs of a learner that relate to expression of his or her feelings and/or emotions. They impact on aspects such as motivation to learn a language, learners' willingness to engage in learning activities etc. These include the need to feel at ease, the need to express one's own ideas and emotions, the need for self-fulfilment etc.

Approach: 'the theoretical rationale that underlies everything that happens in the classroom.' (H.D. Brown, 2002: 11). It is usually manifested through sets of principles which guide the choice of teaching procedures. Examples are 'the communicative approach' and 'task-based learning'.

Assessment: normally used as a general term to refer to various types of testing or evaluation. It provides formative and summative evidence of learner attainment and is accessed in both formal and informal ways. Examinations and tests are examples of formal assessment. 'Listening in' to pairwork, questions and answers to the class, quizzes etc are examples of informal assessment. Assessment matches performance against set criteria, often at fixed points during the learning experience and mostly provides a snap-shot of performance. An exception to this would be portfolio assessment which is completed over time.

- **Formative assessment** may take the form of records of achievement, portfolios, student performance profiles, 'can-do' lists, comments, in writing and / or delivered orally, on performance to date. The purpose of formative assessment is to evaluate performance in a diagnostic way. It can be used to highlight strengths and weaknesses and to provide focussed guidance to learners on how they might improve and / or to consolidate achievement.
- **Summative assessment** provides a summary of what has been achieved and may be expressed as a grade, a mark or a comment (good, excellent, poor etc).
- Black (2002) makes a distinction between summative and formative assessment by referring to 'assessment FOR learning' (formative) and 'assessment OF learning' (summative).

Assessment Tools are the means by which language performance (see below) is measured. They may take several forms such as:

- **Tests:** administered in class, during a lesson, or at the end of a fixed time (half a term, a term, a year etc.) or after a unit of work. These may be internally and/or externally set and marked, and mostly sample performance orally and/ or in writing.
- **Examinations:** these often take the form of a series of tests, frequently have official status, are administered formally and are externally recognised. The other characteristics of tests apply



- **Coursework/Diaries/Logbooks:** these types of assessment take the form of work completed by the learner over a period of time. They may be used formatively to guide learners as an on-going process, or summatively as a final account of what has been explored / learnt / achieved.
- **Certificates:** these may say what level / grade has been obtained (see **Attainment Target Levels**) and often describe the successful performance which has led to the award of the certificate.

Attainment is the progress or the achievement made by learners in relation to a specific assessment framework.

Attainment Target Levels are levels of learner performance set institutionally, regionally or nationally. These are often expressed numerically or alphabetically and are often explained in words. They may be used for curriculum planners, teachers, as well as by learners themselves to describe the performance level that has been attained (i.e. a certain target has been reached) or the performance level that is being targeted.

Classroom Management is the teacher's organisation of a group of learners to establish appropriate modes of conduct, grouping arrangements, and strategies for effective learning in the classroom. It implies the different strategies teachers use to gain and retain a class's attention, keep order, allow learner contributions in an orderly way. It includes planning and managing class activities and the transitions between them, beginnings and endings of lessons as well as organising solo, pair, group and whole class work. Successful classroom management involves the efficient use of materials, resources (hardware and software etc) and the effective use of classroom space.

CLIL: Acronym for - Content and Language Integrated Learning. 'the term for any subject that is taught through the medium of a language other than the mother tongue, e.g. History through German, Geography through French, Citizenship through Spanish'. Parker (2005 p44)

Cognitive Needs: are the needs of learners to employ processes and strategies such as reflection, problem solving, interpretation etc. in order to gain knowledge, develop competences or fulfil a task. These needs may impact on how learners engage with materials and activities.

CEFR: Acronym for *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment*.

Written by a team of international experts grouped as co-authors under the title Council for Cultural Cooperation Education Committee, Modern Languages Division, Strasbourg. Editions exist in a range of European languages. The publication seeks to analyse and describe in a comprehensive way language teaching and learning, language use and language performance in all possible contexts. It also explores in detail a wide range of types of assessment (scales, levels, performance indicators etc).

Communicative Language Competences: 'Competences are the sum of knowledge, skills and characteristics that allow a person to perform actions; (...) communicative language competences are those which empower a person to act using specifically linguistic means'. (CEFR p9)

Communication Strategies: tactics adopted by learners to help performance in listening and speaking, reading and writing. These may include; when speaking: using 'fillers' (e.g. *well, I mean, really...*), hesitation markers (e.g. *ehh, um ...*) to create 'thinking time'; when listening: to try to identify known words and not worry about unknown ones, using the context to hypothesise what is being said, interpreting gestures, facial expression, intonation etc.; when reading: making intelligent guesses about meaning, reading beyond unknown words, using the context; when writing: basing what is written on models, phrases, words taken from native speaker sources.



Compensation Strategies are strategies used by native speakers and learners of a language when they do not know, or cannot immediately recall a word or words needed when speaking or writing.

Cross-curricular refers to approaches in FL teaching and learning where themes or topics from other subject areas (for example from mathematics, history, physical education, art, music etc.) are integrated into language teaching and learning.

Curriculum is a specification of aims relating to knowledge, competences, understandings and approaches, and also of the selection of language and cultural aspects to be used as a basis for planning foreign language teaching and learning.

Educational Stakeholders are parents, institutions, businesses, governmental bodies etc. who have an interest – personal, financial or professional - in what goes on in schools or other educational institutions.

Error Analysis: identifying and analysing errors made by learners and their possible causes. This evidence is used to judge where the learner is in the learning process, what language learning strategies learners are using, and to suggest where and how improvement may be made.

European Language Portfolio (ELP) is, as its introduction states, a 'personal document (and) at the same time an information tool and a companion to language learning. (It) enables all language proficiency – whether acquired within or outside formal educational settings – and intercultural experience to be documented and presented in a comprehensive, complete and internationally comparable way. It also contains guidelines for reflecting on one's own language learning and for planning and monitoring further learning'. Council of Europe (2002)

Evaluation involves making qualitative judgements, often subjective, about various aspects of language performance. Other uses of the term are:

- materials' evaluation
- evaluation of teaching
- evaluation of learning etc.

Extra-curricular Activities refer to activities performed by learners in out-of-lesson, or out-of-school time. Within a language learning context these may include attending a language club, watching a foreign language film, playing a part in a foreign play, participating in a foreign visit etc.

Grading is a measure of performance often using precise criteria and expressed as numbers or letters.

Home Language, often referred to as the **mother tongue**, is normally the language acquired by the learner as his/her first language and usually (though not always) spoken in the learner's home. It can also be referred to as a learner's **L1** (first language). The Council of Europe additionally refers to the **Language of School Education**, which may be the same as the home language for many learners, but different from others. **Modern language(s)** refers to those being taught in school.

Homework literally means work done at home. It is often, however, used more generally to refer to work generated by a teacher and/or the learner him or herself, to be completed outside class time. It can be done by an individual or as pair or group work.

ICT: acronym for 'Information and Communication Technology'.

This includes hardware such as computers, video recorders, radio, television, Overhead Projectors (OHP), interactive whiteboards etc. and software such as narrative media (e.g. videos, web pages), interactive media, adaptive media (computer programmes that give feedback, like simulations and modelling), communicative media (e.g. a discussion forum), and productive media (e.g. Word, PowerPoint). (These categories are taken from Laurillard 2002: 208-212.)



Independent Learning is a process involving learners who choose their own learning objectives and learning paths according to perceived personal needs, aspirations, and preferred modes of learning. Independent learning does not exclude the help of a teacher who may guide the process.

Institutional Constraints may be financial, ideological, methodological requirements imposed on teaching and learning programmes by institutions according to their particular learning aspirations, goals and/or outcomes.

Institutional Resources may refer to people (such as academic / technical / clerical staff), equipment, number of rooms, local, regional, national funding, links with outside help etc. all of which support the teaching and learning programmes offered by the institution.

Interlanguage is the language produced by an individual learner in the process of learning a foreign language. This idiosyncratic variety will differ from standard forms of the target language and is likely to contain errors, simplification, negative transfer etc.

Language Activities 'involve the exercise of one's communicative language competences (see above) ... in processing one or more texts (see below) in order to carry out a task' (CEFR p10).

Language Competences (see Communicative language competences)

Language Performance involves the use of specific linguistic means to carry out a task. Language performance can refer to either the process or the product.

Language Proficiency is what a learner can do and/or how well he/she can perform using language, given an identified and defined purpose. Language proficiency is often measured with reference to a scale of levels.

Learner Autonomy is the capacity learners have to take charge of their own learning. This implies choice of aims, content, approaches and/or forms of evaluation based on reflection related to individual needs and interests.

Learner Feedback is an account of progress / performance given to learners by teachers or peers to enable them to reflect on, analyse and evaluate what they have or have not achieved. It may also refer to what learners tell those who are teaching them and/or monitoring their progress, how well they, the learners, believe they are performing.

Learning Aims are the targets, normally longer term (e.g. for a few weeks, half a term), expressed relatively generally, which are set for learners to achieve within and at the end of a learning programme.

Learning Objectives are the targets, normally short term (e.g. for a lesson, series of lessons) which identify precisely what learners are expected to learn. They may be defined in terms of skill- and content-based objectives (what learners should be able to say, write etc at the end of the period of learning e.g. talk about their hobbies, family etc) but also as discrete linguistic or cultural targets (grammatical, lexical, phonological, socio-cultural) etc.

Learning Process are the cognitive processes, pathways and sequences which operate in the minds of human beings when learning takes place and which lead to the internalisation of new information. These processes may be conscious or subconscious. They are innate processes by means of which the human mind perceives, remembers, categorises and conceptualises new information. They include: structuring and categorising new information, identifying its salient features, making generalisations about patterns, speculating on its meaning or relevance, drawing analogies between old and new information etc.

Learning Strategies are the range of tactics a learner uses to make learning effective. These may be 'specific actions, behaviours, steps, or techniques that students employ – often consciously – to improve their progress in internalising, storing, retrieving, and using the L2 (second language)' (Oxford 1993 p175).



Learning Styles are an individual's predisposition towards perceiving and processing information in a particular way. Examples of different styles are analytic vs holistic processing; auditory, visual or kinaesthetic etc. One of these may dominate and often they exist in unequal combination.

Lesson Plans outline in a systematic way how a particular unit of work is to be taught. They normally identify:

- learning objectives, which may be new or based on/ consolidating/extending previous learning
- proposed or expected learning outcomes
- equipment, resources, materials needed by the teacher and the learners for the lesson(s)
- a logical sequence of activities together with an indication of possible timings
- differentiation within the proposed activities to account for a range of abilities and learning styles
- the practice and use of some/all language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing)
- evaluation and assessment opportunities
- future targets.

Mentors are normally practising teachers in school or other educational establishments who guide and help student teachers who are training to become foreign language teachers.

Metalanguage refers to the language we use when talking about language itself. This may consist of terminology – sentence, noun, past tense, intonation, discourse - or the type of grammar rules that can be found in reference grammars and some school books.

Methodology is the implementation of learning objectives through teaching procedures. It is based on principles deriving from theories of language description, language learning and language use. Methodology may focus on how teachers deal with the four main skills of speaking, writing, listening and reading or on specific aspects of language such as grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation.

Organisational Forms (of teaching) are the ways in which learners are managed and grouped for the purposes of learning. These include working solo/independently, working with a partner (pair work), group work (normally 3+ learners together), and as a whole class.

Peer-Assessment refers to judgements about learner performance, normally according to set and explicit criteria, made by same or similar age learners.

Peers are same or similar age learners.

Portfolio is a dossier or collection of work, in the widest sense, normally produced over time by one individual, designed to represent his or her achievement. It may contain evaluative checklists (completed by the individual learner and/or others about him/her), samples of written work, examination results, certificates etc, and other evidence of learning (cassettes, software etc). All these elements are assembled in a portfolio as evidence of an individual's performance.

Project Work is work designed to be completed over time by the learner either working solo or with peers. Often project work has a theme or is based on a topic chosen by the individual learner/a group of learners or supplied by the teacher.

Resources are the variety of sources teachers can draw on in the process of locating, selecting and/or producing ideas, texts, activities, tasks and reference materials useful for their learners.

Self-Assessment is a judgement made by the learner on his or her own performance, knowledge, strategies etc.



Strategies are seen as a hinge between a learner's resources (competences) and what he/she can do with them (communicative activities)' (CEFR p25).

Socio-cultural refers to language actions, activities, behaviour, attitudes, values, norms etc. which relate to specific communities, and which are also manifestations and reflections of a particular culture or particular cultures in which they are embedded.

Spoken Exchanges are a sequence of spoken or oral utterances between two speakers who listen and interact with each other. Normally each utterance is a response by one person to what has been said by the other.

Task is 'any purposeful action considered by an individual as necessary in order to achieve a given result in the context of a problem to be solved, an obligation to fulfil or an objective to be achieved.' (CEFR p10)

Team Teaching involves two or more teachers, or student teachers working together in a classroom with a common group of learners. Student teachers often team teach when they start their training in order to build up confidence and experience without having the sole responsibility for a whole class. Team teaching may involve teachers of the same or different subjects.

Team Work refers to the process or product of a number of individuals working together to produce a common project, joint piece of work, an agreed solution to a problem.

Texts: 'Text is used to cover any piece of language, whether a spoken utterance or a piece of writing, which users/learners receive, produce or exchange. There can thus be no act of communication through language without a text' (CEFR p93).

Text Types are groups of texts which exhibit similar features resulting from their overall function, from rhetorical conventions associated with them, from style etc. Common spoken/spoken interaction text types are: telephone calls, conversations, jokes, stories. Common written text types are: narrative texts, informative (articles etc), persuasive (speeches etc), letters, poems, advertisements, emails, text messages etc.

Virtual Learning Environments are web-based environments which may consist of some of the following key features: noticeboard, learners' personal pages, narrative media (e.g, videos, web pages), adaptive media (computer programmes that give feedback, like simulations and modelling programmes), web resources, conferencing tools, assessment tools, email, learner's homepage and tutor's support.



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The table below will help you to locate terms in the descriptors.

	Context	Methodology	Resources	Lesson Planning	Conducting a Lesson	Independent Learning	Assessment of Learning
aims & objectives	B2			A1-6		A3, C1, D1, F2	A1
<i>Common European Framework of Reference</i>	A3,4, B7						B6
communication strategies		A9					D5
cultural competence		G4					
culture	B1, C2	A3, G1-7		B4	B4		E 1-3
curriculum	A1,2			A1			
ELP	A3,4						C3
extra-curricular activities						F1	
grammar		A12, B12, E1-5		B5			
homework						B1-4	
ICT			8-11		D5	E1-3	
interaction with learners					C3		
interaction: spoken /written		A2-4,9		C2			D5,6
(language) performance							A3, B1,4,7, C1
learner autonomy						A1-6	
learning strategies					C6	A4	
learning styles				B10	C5	A2	
lesson plan				B1, 12	A2		
listening		C1-8		B3			D3
needs (learners')	B2, B4-5	C1, D1, E4	3	A1, A4-5	D1	A5	
peer assessment						D5	C2
peers	C6, 7						
portfolios						D1-5	A1
project work						C1,2,3,6	
reading		D1-9	3	B3			D4
self-assessment							A1
speaking		A1-12		B3			
vocabulary		B12, C7, D6, F1,2		B5			
writing		B1-12		B3			



What is the EPOSTL?

The European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages (EPOSTL) is a document intended for students undergoing their initial teacher education which encourages them to reflect on the didactic knowledge and skills necessary to teach languages, helps them to assess their own didactic competences and enables them to monitor their progress and to record their experiences of teaching during the course of their teacher education. The EPOSTL consists of three main sections:

- a **personal statement** section
- a **self-assessment**, which contains lists of 'can-do' descriptors relating to didactic competences
- a **dossier**, in which students can document progress and record examples of work relevant to their teacher education and their future profession.

Background to the EPOSTL

The EPOSTL was developed for the European Centre for Modern Languages of the Council of Europe by a team of teacher educators from five different countries (Armenia, Austria, Norway, Poland, UK). It arose from a project initiated by the ECML, 'A Framework for Teacher Education', which had the overall aim of addressing the broad question of harmonising teacher education across Europe. It was decided by the project group members to build on existing documents already developed by the Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe - *Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)* and the European Language Portfolio (ELP) as well as the European Commission-financed project European Profile for Language Teacher Education – A Frame of Reference (Profile). These were used in the following ways:

- CEFR:** The 'can-do' formulations and many terms and insights from the *CEFR* have been incorporated into the descriptors.
- ELP:** The three-part structure of the EPOSTL (personal statement – self-assessment – dossier) bears some similarity to that of the *ELP*, as is its emphasis on reflection. An essential difference between the two documents is that while the *ELP* is concerned with *language* competences, the EPOSTL is concerned with *didactic* competences.
- Profile:** The initial idea of providing a 'frame of reference' came from this document. Insights from the *Profile* provided valuable input to the descriptors in the self-assessment section. However, whilst the *Profile* is aimed at teacher educators and curriculum designers, the target group of the EPOSTL is the student teacher.

Aims and uses of the EPOSTL

The central aims of the EPOSTL are as follows:

1. to encourage students to reflect on the competences a teacher strives to attain and on the underlying knowledge which feeds these competences;
2. to help prepare students for their future profession in a variety of teaching contexts;
3. to promote discussion between students and between students and their teacher educators and mentors;
4. to facilitate self-assessment of students' competence;
5. to help students develop awareness of their strengths and weaknesses related to teaching;
6. to provide an instrument which helps chart progress.



7. to serve as the springboard for discussions, topics for term papers, research projects etc.
8. to provide support during teaching practice and assist in discussions with mentors; this will help mentors to provide systematic feedback.

The EPOSTL is the property of the student teacher and is an instrument to promote professional growth through reflection and dialogue. As such it should be seen as a means of enhancing autonomous learning. This does not mean that the role of the teacher educator is not important: he or she will need to provide guidance as to when and how the EPOSTL might best be used.

The EPOSTL should be made available to students at the beginning of their teacher education and it should accompany them throughout their teacher education, teaching practice and into their profession. It should be incorporated into existing course structures and relate to what is being taught and learned. It should be used over a period of time, if possible throughout the teacher education programme. This will help to chart progress and growth.

Although primarily intended for students, the EPOSTL will assist teacher educators who are involved in curriculum design by providing a tool which helps to clarify aims and specify content and which thus points to strengths and weaknesses in teacher education programmes. It may thus play a useful complementary role to that of the *European Profile for Language Teacher Education*. Further, the EPOSTL can facilitate discussion of aims and curricula between teacher educators working within different national or European contexts.

Contents of the EPOSTL

The EPOSTL contains the following sections:

- An **introduction**, which provides a brief overview of the EPOSTL
- A **personal statement** section, to help students about to begin their teacher education to reflect on general questions related to teaching
- A **self-assessment** section, consisting of 'can-do' descriptors, to facilitate reflection and self-assessment by student teachers
- A **dossier**, for students to make the outcome of self-assessment transparent, to provide evidence of progress and to record examples of work relevant to teaching
- A **glossary** of the most important terms relating to language learning and teaching used in the EPOSTL
- An **index** of terms used in the descriptors
- A **users' guide**

Introduction

This can be used by student teachers who are beginning to use the EPOSTL to familiarise themselves with its main aims, content and uses. It contains the most essential information from the users' guide.



Personal Statement

The personal statement provides some activities which help student teachers to reflect on aspects related to teaching in general and to think about questions that may be important at the beginning of their teacher education. It is suggested that activity 4 should be done, since the following text on the role and value of reflection builds on this activity.

Self-assessment

At the heart of the EPOSTL are the 193 descriptors of competences related to language teaching which comprise the self-assessment section. These descriptors may be regarded as a set of core competences which language teachers should strive to attain. It should be noted that the descriptors are aimed at future school teachers in secondary education (ages 10 – 18), teaching general language. Other descriptors might be needed for other contexts; for example, for primary school teachers (i.e. young learners), for CLIL, for adult education etc.

The descriptors were formulated by members of the ECML project group and have been agreed upon after consultation with student teachers and teacher educators from 33 European countries. However, the descriptors should not be regarded as a prescriptive list, nor as comprising a fixed qualification profile. Rather they should be seen as competences that both student teachers and practising teachers will attempt to develop continuously throughout their education and teaching career. Whilst the EPOSTL does not aim to impose a rationale or methodology, it is hoped that by identifying core competences and making these competences transparent, it will make a small contribution to those wishing to cross both institutional and national borders and to seek common principles which might be applicable across Europe.

Categorisation of descriptors

The descriptors are grouped into seven general categories which have the following headings:

- Context
- Methodology
- Resources
- Lesson Planning
- Conducting a Lesson
- Independent Learning
- Assessment of Learning

The seven categories represent areas in which teachers require a variety of competences and need to make decisions related to teaching.

At the beginning of each section is a brief introductory text on the respective topic area. These texts are not intended to provide a comprehensive discussion, but merely highlight certain aspects of the topic which are dealt with in the 'can-do' descriptors.

Each general category has been sub-divided. For example, 'Conducting a Lesson' includes the sub-headings: 'Using Lesson Plans', 'Content', 'Interaction with Learners', 'Classroom Management', 'Classroom Language'.



Both with the general categories and with individual descriptors it has been necessary, for reasons of clarity, to present them as discrete items. In reality, however, there is overlap between them. For example, similar decision relating to the teaching of reading will apply to methodology, planning a lesson, conducting a lesson, assessment etc. For the same reason of clarity, different aspects of language such as speaking, vocabulary, grammar etc. have been listed separately. In teaching and learning these aspects will, however, usually be integrated. Also, whilst several descriptors make references to principles of autonomous learning, these are spread through various sections. This reflects the fact that learner autonomy pervades many aspects of learning and teaching.

Within each sub-heading each descriptor is numbered for ease of reference. The sequencing should not necessarily be regarded as significant. In general, similar descriptors are grouped together and on occasions the order might correspond to the order of a particular teaching sequence – for example, in the 'Methodology – Listening' section, 'I can select texts appropriate to the needs, interests and language level of the learners' precedes 'I can provide a range of pre-listening activities which help learners to orientate themselves to a text' but the order of many of the descriptor lists does not represent any form of prioritisation.

Self-assessment scales

Each descriptor is accompanied by a bar, which helps students to visualise and chart their own competence. Students can colour in the bar according to their own assessment. This may take place at different stages of their teacher education.

On completion of her teacher education programme a student teacher may have produced a bar which looks something like this.

2. I can create a supportive atmosphere that invites learners to take part in speaking activities.



In the above example the student has made self-assessments at three stages of her teacher education, which chart her growing competence. However, she feels she still has some way to go and has therefore left part of the bar blank. She has also added the date on which the self-assessment was carried out. It should be remembered that the bars only give a provisional and approximate representation of a student's competence. Despite the apparently linear nature of the bars competences will expand incrementally - and may even contract - as new knowledge brings new perspectives. Student teachers are encouraged, with or without the participation of their tutors and peers, to review these bars from time to time to reflect on whether and why improvement has been indicated.

Whilst in the *Common European Framework of Reference* and in the *European Language Portfolio* self-assessment descriptors are scaled (A1, B2 etc.), the EPOSTL does not use any numerical scale since the authors believe that it is very difficult to quantify didactic competences.

It should be noted that it is not expected that all bars should be filled in at the end of the teaching education programme. Learning to teach and becoming a good teacher is a continuous and life-long process!

Wording of the descriptors

It is intended that the meaning of all descriptors should be transparent to users since this is a prerequisite for self-assessment. For this reason, the authors have tried to avoid complexity and difficult



terminology. A glossary is included at the end of the EPOSTL, which explains the most important terms used and the way in which the EPOSTL uses them.

Many of the words used are open to individual interpretation. e.g. 'meaningful', 'appropriate'. It follows that there is no 'key', 'answer' or 'solution' to the issues raised by the descriptors but that individual answers will emerge from reflection, dialogue among students, between students and their educators and between students and their mentors in school. Moreover, many descriptors will be interpreted in light of local contexts.

Beyond descriptors

The descriptors list didactic skills and competences that need to be acquired. They do not address important issues which underlie them. For example, the descriptor 'I can identify and evaluate a range of coursebooks/materials appropriate for the age, interests and the language level of the learners' throws up a series of questions relating both to materials and learners. Additional questions that need to be asked by both students, teacher educators and mentors include:

What theories of learning, language, culture etc. are relevant to the general categories and to individual descriptors?

What learning and teaching principles feed into competences and skills?

What knowledge is required to accomplish a skill?

What beliefs and values are reflected in individual descriptors?

If you think you can accomplish a certain skill, how do you know you can do it?

Although the descriptors provide a systematic way of considering competences, they should not be regarded simply as a checklist! It is important that they act as a stimulus for students, teacher educators and mentors to discuss important aspects of teacher education which underlie them and that they contribute to developing professional awareness.

The Dossier

The primary function of the student teacher dossier is to help students support claims that their self-assessment of 'can do' statements is an accurate reflection of their specific skills and abilities. To do this they can collect a dossier of evidence of their work. The dossier will provide them with the opportunity to make the results of both personal and dialogic reflection transparent and to think about their progress and development as a teacher.

The dossier can be seen as representing a bridge between the skills specified in descriptors and the underlying knowledge necessary to acquire these skills and also between the descriptors and the content of the teacher education programme.

Whilst the dossier remains the property of the student teacher, he or she may wish to make items available to tutors, mentors, peers etc.

The dossier could contain:

- A. Evidence from lessons the student teacher has given
- B. Evidence in the form of lesson observations and evaluations



- C. Evidence such as detailed reports, comments, checklists etc compiled by different people involved in the teacher education programme
- D. Evidence from an analysis of what students have done as a teacher
- E. Evidence in the form of case studies and action research
- F. Evidence from reflection

A 'list of documents' checklist can be found at the end of each category to help students collect evidence systematically.

The Glossary

Here terms related to language learning and teaching which occur in the EPOSTL are defined – in the specific sense in which they are used in the document. In many cases terms are defined according to the way in which they are used in the *Common European Framework of Reference*.

The Index

The index helps users to locate terms used in the descriptors. It takes the form of a chart in which terms relating to language learning and teaching are listed vertically and the sections of the self-assessment, horizontally. This will aid cross-referencing: it is possible, for example, to discover at a glance in which sections terms such as 'culture' or 'grammar' occur.

References and links

Information on the EPOSTL project: <http://www.ecml.at/epostl>

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Information on CEFR and ELP:

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European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages

A reflection tool for language teacher education

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